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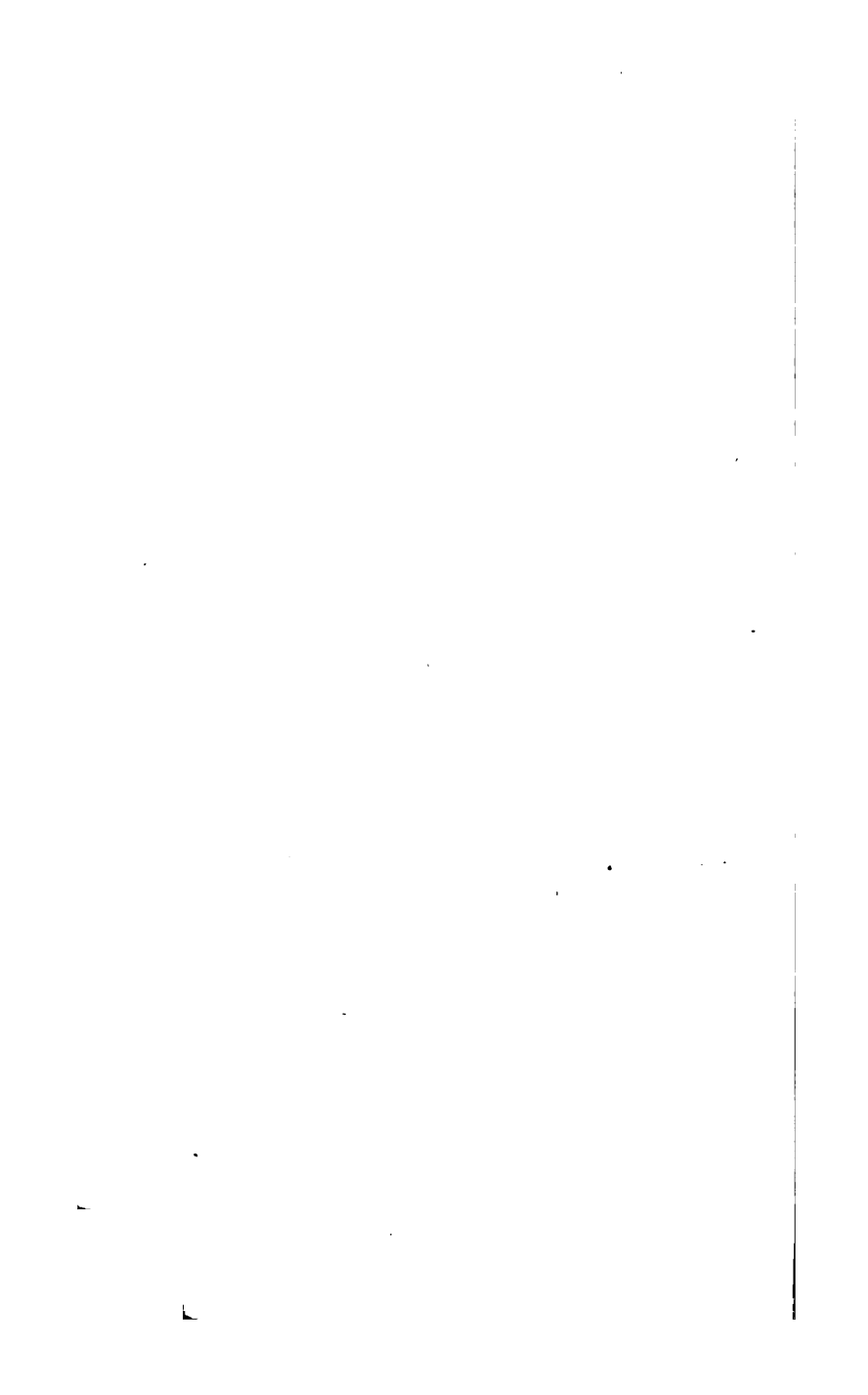
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43. 18.







BRITISH SONG BIRDS.

**DIRECTIONS FOR KEEPING
BRITISH
CAGE BIRDS ;**

DESCRIPTION AND HABITS OF EACH SPECIES ;

**BEST MODES OF
PREVENTION AND CURE
OF THE SEVERAL**

DISTEMPERS TO WHICH THEY ARE SUBJECT ;

HOW TO DISTINGUISH THE COCK FROM THE HEN ;

WITH

**EVERY PARTICULAR TO KEEP THEM IN FULL AND RICH
MELODY OF SONG.**

THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT BY

T. ANDREWES.

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AND MOST WIRE-WORKERS AND DEALERS IN BIRDS.

1843.



DESCRIPTION, CHARACTER, &c.

OF EACH SPECIES OF

BRITISH SINGING BIRDS.

ABERDEVINE.

THIS well-known song-bird, sometimes called the *Siskin*, and known in Sussex by the name of the *Barley-bird*, being always found there at that season of the year, is conjectured by Syme, that if not the original stock-bird of the cage-canary, it is very similar to it, and ought to be considered rather a variety than a distinct species; but in this assertion we think he is in error, for if he had examined the points of the bills, length of the tails, and the motions and manners of these several birds, he would have come to a different conclusion. Nevertheless, it certainly bears some resemblance to the green variety of the canary-bird, except with respect to the brightness of colouring. According to Fleming, the head of the male, above, is black; the neck, breast, and rump, lemon-yellow; but male birds have been seen with the head grey rather than black, and others with neck, breast and rump as bright yellow as the marks on the wings of the goldfinch.

It breeds in the north of Europe, and generally visits Britain at the time the swallow takes its departure.

As a cage-bird it is frequently paired with the canary;* and is a persevering and lively songster, one having been known to sing for ten or eleven months in the year. Its song would be very pleasing, though not so plaintive as that of the linnet,

* Vide Smith's *Instructions for Breeding the Canary*; published by J. Limbird.

nor so sprightly as that of the goldfinch, if it did not at intervals introduce a jarring guttural note, almost like the note of a nightingale when angry. The Aberdevine is also a good companion for linnets, goldfinches, &c.; and may be fed according to the directions here given for the linnet, or chaffinch: in its wild state, it feeds chiefly on the seeds of the birch and alder.

BABILLARD.

THIS bird is called also the *Lesser White Throat*, or *Nettle Creeper*, and its song consists of a number of soft, chirping notes, several of which are very sweet and musical, and though occasionally pretty loud, especially when another bird tries to excel him, yet they are generally so low as not to be heard a little way off. When he sings in a room, during the earlier part of the year, he is heard to the greatest advantage. He sings almost incessantly, and when singing erects the feathers of his head and throat, and throws himself into a variety of strange attitudes. In confinement with other birds, it is generally disposed to domineer. We have read of one which was so pugnacious that it even attacked an oxeye-tit twice its own size, and whose feathers it pulled out. It will generally, a day or two after its capture, take flies and other insects from the hand. Feed it on scraped beef and egg made moist with water; in time he will feed on bread, egg, and a little German paste: now and then you must give him a meal worm.

BLACKBIRD.

THIS is the largest of the native songsters of Britain, and likewise one of the first that proclaims the welcome spring by shrill harmonious notes, as if he were the harbinger of nature, to awaken the rest of the feathered tribe to prepare for the approaching season. He begins to sing in February or March, and continues till about the close of July, and again resumes his song in Autumn. Bechstein gives the following account of the musical properties of the Blackbird in confinement: "its voice is so strong and clear, that in a city it may be heard from one end of a long street to the other. Its memory is so

good, that it retains, without mixing them, several airs at once, and it will even repeat little sentences. It is a great favorite with the lovers of a plaintive, clear, and musical song, and may in these respects be preferred to the bullfinch, whose voice is softer, more flute-like, and also more melancholy." The Blackbird is classed by naturalists among the mason-birds, from the architecture of its nest being formed of mud or clay, well tempered with the bill, moistened with water for the better adhesion; the outer-frame differs little from that of the song-thrush, except perhaps in being more massive, as is also the clay lining, which is put on in a wet state; but to prevent this moisture from injuring the eggs, it is lined with a thick bedding of dried hay, moss, and bits of twigs. This little architect builds its nest the earliest of the feathered tribe. The hen lays four or five eggs, of a blueish green colour, sprinkled with dusky spots. They are hatched in March. If the young be ten or twelve days old when taken from the nest, they may be easily reared by feeding them with bullock's heart, sheep's heart, or any other sort of lean and fresh meat, chopped fine and mixed with fig dust. People in the country generally feed them with cheese-curd, or white bread and milk. Feed them once in every two hours, and be sure to remove their dirt, for, like all other song-birds, they thrive best when care is taken to keep them in a clean state. It is advisable, also, to give them a clean bed of straw whenever the nest has become dirty. Separate your nestlings* as soon as you can. Cock nestlings may almost always be told by their being the blackest birds in the nest; but when they have changed their chicken-feathers they become coal-black,† while the plumage of the hen

* A *nestling* is one from the nest; a *pusher*, a young bird taken three or four days after it has left his nest; and a *brancher* is a bird full grown, but has its nestling feathers.

† Albinos frequently occur among these birds: several instances are recorded. In 1829, a blackbird's nest containing four or five young ones, was found at Rougham, in Suffolk, in it was a white one, with red eyes, and its bill yellow. In the British Museum there is a female of a dusky white or cream colour, with Yorkshire for its locality. Mr. B. Campbell presented a male entirely white to the Zoological Society—it was found in June 1832, at Belsthorpe, Nottinghamshire. Bechstein, in his interesting little work on cage-birds, says, 'the white variety is very well known; there is besides, the streaked, the black with a white head, and the pearl grey.' Some years since, there was a white black bird at Bishop Porteus's palace, at Fulham, which that venerable, good, and learned prelate, very highly prized. Its song was beautifully musical, and it soon became

remains of a rusty black : but the best way of distinguishing them, is by their eyes, the *irides* or circle that circumvests the eye of the young cock-bird, is yellow; the hen's considerably paler; his bill is black, and seems not perfectly yellow till he is near a year old : the hen's more pale or brownish, with the tip black : the mouth in both is yellow within.

When they begin to feed themselves, the best food is German paste, bread, or stale bun and a little bruised hemp seed, not moistened. Now and then a little egg, boiled hard, with the food. Insects of any sort may be given to them, but you must not give too many in one day, as they will induce them to slight and refuse their regular food. They are very fond of a snail, which when given, will often make them sing. If they should happen to be disordered put a little cochineal in the drink. As this bird is fond of bathing you must put a large saucer or other vessel full of clean water in his cage during the warmweather. He is commonly a strong and hardy bird, but generally shy.

BLACKCAP.

'Of all the birds,' says Sweet, 'that reside in, or visit the British Islands, there is none that can come up to the present for song, except the nightingale, and by some persons it is more admired than even that bird.' Nor is Sweet singular in his eulogy. All agree in praising its melody. In Norfolk, and in other places in Great Britain, it is called the mock nightingale; and indeed like the nightingale, it continues its song far into the night. Bechstein says 'that it rivals the nightingale.' 'If,' adds that author, 'it has less volume,

pride of the servants, and the great '*lion*' of the palace. In August 1841, a lad in the employ of Mr. H. Adams, butcher, of Windsor, caught a beautiful blackbird which was perfectly white: in taking it to Windsor, the lad killed it, but without injuring the plumage. Her Majesty having heard of the circumstance, sent to the boy's master requesting to see the bird; the Queen kept it, and the "fortunate youth" was favored with a handsome present from Her Majesty, who ordered it to London to be stuffed and preserved. In the *Penny Cyclopædia* [vol iv. p. 478], it says, that 'Aristotle [book ix, ch. 19], mentions the white variety, observing that in size it is equal to the black, and that its voice is nearly the same. He adds, that it is found in Arcadia, and no where else. Varro, *de re Rustica* [book iii], says that white blackbirds were shown in public at Rome, with parrots, &c.'

strength, and expression, it is more pure, easy, and flute-like in its tones, and its song is perhaps more varied, smooth and delicate.' 'His charming and delicate warblings are heard,' says Mr. Blyth, 'to very great advantage in a room, but the cheering, animated notes with which he usually finishes his song are almost too loud and stunning when heard in doors, though so exquisitely beautiful in the open air. The notes of two of these birds which I have long kept in confinement are extremely different, so that I can always with ease tell which of them is singing; yet no person who knows the song of the blackcap could ever possibly mistake the voice of either of them for that of another species, though so different from each other. One of them sings part of the garden-warbler's song, and the other intermixes a number of the nightingale's notes, though both of them were old birds when caught. When a nightingale, which I have, was singing in his finest style, I observed one of the blackcaps listen with great attention, and when the nightingale had ceased, the blackcap repeated several of his notes very correctly, but I have never observed him to attempt them since. I once heard a wild blackcap repeat the notes of the song-thrush, so correctly as to deceive me, until he broke out into his usual loud clear notes.'*

In its wild state it feeds on the berries of the ivy, privet, honeysuckle, and elder, and also on ripe pears and currants. When first caught feed him on scraped beef, and egg boiled hard, made moist with water; in time you may get them to feed on dry food, German paste, egg, &c. not moistened; and give it occasionally some soft fruit, such as a roasted apple, &c. If it becomes disordered give it a small quantity of hempseed, and put a little saffron into its drink.

Gardens, orchards, and thick hedges are the favorite haunts of the blackcap, and there among brambles and nettles, or in some low bush, its nest is built of dry goose grass, wool and moss, lined with feathers, a few horse hairs, and the fibres of roots. The eggs are four or five in number, of a pale reddish brown, sprinkled with spots of a darker colour. The cock and hen sit by turns, and when she sits he sometimes brings her worms, flies, and other insect-food.

The male blackcap is nearly six inches in length: upper part of the head black; back of the neck ashy brown; upper parts of the body grey, with a greenish tinge; quills and tails

* Field Naturalist's Magazine, vol. i, p. 315.

dusky, edged with dull green; breast and belly light ash colour; legs and feet blueish-grey, or lead colour; bill brown, irides dark hazel. The female is of larger size; the crown of the head is of an umber-brown or rust colour; and the plumage generally is darker and more inclining to greenish than it is in the male.

This fruit-eating warbler arrives in England in April, and departs from it in September.

BULLFINCH.

WHEN full grown, the cock bullfinch may be told by the crown of his head being much blacker than that of the hen, and by his having a bright red breast; and, indeed, all his colours are more resplendent than the hen's. Though this bird has naturally but three not very musical notes, it may be taught to pipe almost any tune, and even to talk. When once it has learnt a lesson it seldom forgets it, and if well taught it becomes not only a very amusing but a valuable bird. Instances have occurred of nine, and even ten, guineas being given for a well taught bullfinch. 'A gentleman, in Lancashire,' Pennant tells us, 'had one that could whistle several tunes, and which was so well disciplined that it would come at its master's call, perch on his shoulders, and at his command go through a difficult musical lesson.' Both sexes will learn to pipe and speak, but the cock is preferable, as he is more easily taught, and is handsomer.

They make their nest of the twigs of birch, moss, and fibrous roots, and line it entirely with fine roots. The eggs are four or five in number, of a blueish white colour, spotted with brown and red. They have two or three broods in the year, the first being hatched about the close of May or at the beginning of June. If you wish to bring them up from the nest, let them be a fortnight old before you take them under your care. When you have kept them about a week in doors, you may commence piping, whistling, or talking to them, whatever you wish to teach them.

Feed them, while young, on white bread, scalded rapeseed broken and the yolk of an egg, moistened with water until it becomes a paste, let them have a meal of this every two hours from morning until evening. It is rather difficult to tell a

cock nestling from a hen; but some persons decide the question by pulling four or five feathers out of the breasts of the young when about three weeks old. Those whose feathers are replaced, ten or twelve days afterwards, by very red new ones, are cocks; while those whose new feathers are of a pale brown colour, are hens.

When they are capable of feeding themselves, give them canary-seed, along with a little rape-seed. Should they happen to become disordered put a little saffron into their drink, and give them a small quantity of hemp-seed. If fed entirely on hemp-seed, the colour of its plumage will change to black, and if that be its only food for a month or six weeks before it moults off its old feathers in the autumn, those which will succeed them will be black. Let them now and then have a few insects.

THE CANARY.

Is probably the greatest favorite of all the feathered choristers; not only for its unassuming, yet splendid plumage, but also for the brilliancy of its delicious and harmonious notes—pre-eminencies, which, at all times, gain it admittance to the splendid drawing rooms of the prince, the noble, and the wealthy: in fact, it may, we think, be safely said, that Canaries form the ornithological aristocracy.

The name of this beautiful songster, is, more properly, the Canary Finch, of the genus *Fringilla Canaria*, (*Linnaeus*), it consists of two varieties, one having the bill and body straw-colour, quill and tail-feathers greenish; the other with body above, brown, eyebrows yellow. The prevailing colour of the Canary, is, however, yellow mixed with grey; but, in a state of nature, it is chiefly grey. It is from the Canary Islands, where it is mostly found in a wild state: it inhabits Africa, and is to be met with at Palma, Fayal, Cape Verd, and Madeira, as well as the Canaries.

When these birds become a month old, you will perceive the cock appear larger and longer in the body and limbs, and strike out their feathers stronger in colour; the feathers over the eyes, crown of the head or cap, and under the throat, are generally a stronger yellow, and they soon shew themselves the most lively and active birds. The cocks frequently, when only six weeks or two months old, will begin to warble to

themselves, when quiet; and if they do not, you may conclude they are hens.

The Canary bird is not so delicate or tender as many may imagine. Their complaints originate chiefly from colds and carelessness. How frequently are birds hung up close to the top corner of a window, with the sash down about one foot, and a strong draught of air running through or by the cage, thus they are frequently exposed for several hours, late in the evening, when going to roost without any consideration whether the air be damp, cold or dry. In this manner many a fine bird is endangered, if not killed, by taking cold, which often proves incurable. When birds are in good health, and lively, their feathers will appear and feel sleek and smooth, adhering close to their bodies. Whenever you perceive the reverse of this, be assured something is out of order. A bird when in health requires only cleanliness, good seed, fresh bird-sand, and soft water every morning.

The Canary is very susceptible of instruction, and may be easily taught the notes of the flageolet, bird organ, or any other instrument that is mellow and sweet in its tone, but those Canaries are most esteemed who introduce into their warblings the notes of the nightingale, wood-lark, or tit-lark, and this may easily be accomplished by placing those birds near the young Canaries. The most extraordinary proof of the powers of this bird was evinced in the celebrated Talking Canary, who could utter several words very distinctly, such as "Sweet pretty Dick!" "Sweet pretty Dear!" &c. it was publicly exhibited in Regent Street, London, February, 1839.

As to observations on breeding and matching of birds; formation of their cages; various diseases and modes of cure; and other useful information, we must refer the reader to *Smith's Instructions for the Breeding, and Management of the Canary Finch*.

CHAFFINCH.

THIS strong, healthy, and pretty bird, is a very agreeable songster. Those chaffinches which are brought from Essex are reckoned the best. Some from that county have been sold for a guinea and a half, and others for two guineas each. In Saxony and Hesse they are highly esteemed.

It makes a very neat nest near the top of a high hedge, or in the branches on the side of a tree, of moss, lichen, and wool, lining it with feathers and hair. The hen lays five or six eggs of a pale reddish colour, sprinkled with dark purple spots. The cock is very attentive during the time they are hatching. They have two or three broods in the year, the first being hatched at the beginning of May.

You may begin to bring them up when they are ten days old, or even younger, and feed them on scalded rapeseed, bread and the yolk of an egg; the same as the directions given for the Bullfinch.

The following is from the interesting 'Journal of a Naturalist.' 'The male bird is remarkable for the cleanliness and trimness of his plumage, which, without having any great variety or splendour of coloring, is so composed and arranged, and the white on his wings so brilliant, as to render him a very beautiful little creature. The female is as remarkable for the quiet unobtrusive tintings of her dress.' Temminck says, 'that in autumn after the moult, the colours of the plumage of the male are more bright than they are in the spring, because all the feathers of the upper and lower parts are terminated by a clear ash colour; and, at the season of love, the male bird's dress becomes decked with pure and brilliant colour, without the aid of a second moult, the edges of the barbs being worn away with use, and thus suffering those colours which had been hidden to appear in all their beauty.'

Varieties.—Pure white, yellowish white, some parts of the body white. The usual colours with a white collar; wings and tail white. Aldovandus mentions one partly yellowish and partly blackish.

Though in its natural state the chaffinch sings only from February to the beginning of June, yet when brought up from the nest it will sing during six or seven months. As soon as it can feed itself you must give it small seeds of various kinds, and now and then a few caterpillars, &c.

DUNNOCK.

THIS bird is also known as the *Hedge Sparrow*, or *Hedge Chanter*; and it is considerably less than the common spar-

row ; it is not such a despicable bird as many imagine, yet no bird is more despised, though it ought to be more valued, for, if you listen to its song, you will hear many delightful notes in it. It being so numerous, lessens the worth of this bird as of every thing else, though ever so valuable of itself. The cock sings a short, but very sweet and plaintive song, and according to Mr. W. H. White, the hen has ' a subdued and interesting warble.' In the summer-time they feed principally upon insects, but in the winter mostly on seeds. They make their nest of moss and wool and line it with hair. The hen lays four or five eggs of a fine pale blue color : there are two broods in the year, the last being hatched in the beginning of May. Nestlings, when brought up, should be fed on a stiff paste made in the same manner as directed for the bullfinch and chaffinch. When they can feed themselves let them have rape and other seeds.

FURZE-WARBLER.

THIS pretty bird, known also as the *Furze Wren*, or *Dartford Warbler*, is of a lively, restless, yet amiable disposition, for it will live in complete tranquility not only with birds of its own, but with those of other species. His song, which strongly resembles the whitethroat's, is very brisk and contains some notes like those of the linnet, but it has many which are quite original. While singing he erects his crest and tail, and whisks about with great agility. It is fond of ripe mealy pears, but it feeds principally on insects.

THE GARDEN-WARBLER

MAKES its appearance in England about the middle of April ; but is not generally seen until the following month. It announces its arrival by pouring forth melody from the top of some high pear-tree, or from among the branches of an elm. ' He commences usually with some low twittering notes not unlike those of the swallow, and raising his voice by degrees through a series of charming and most delightful

modulations, many of which closely resemble parts of the nightingale's song, he ends with the full rich whistle of the blackbird, but delivered in a more hurried cadence. It certainly possesses several of the nightingale's notes, but those of the blackbird predominate; the song is, nevertheless, perfectly original, and is uttered in a more lively and animated manner than the song of either of those birds. He continues singing usually about three or four minutes, when he stops as if to take breath, and almost immediately commences again; his deep, rich, and mellow warble is heard throughout the day, and occasionally even after sunset; singing nearly throughout the summer, and often beginning and ending with the same blackbird-notes." * During the spring it feeds chiefly on the berries of the elder, privet, and ivy, but in summer it enters orchards and gardens for the sake of the fruit, committing great havoc, among the Kentish cherries more especially. It also eats insects.

GOLDFINCH.

THE cock Goldfinch is readily distinguished from the hen by all his colors being brighter, by the edges of his wings being of a glossy black up to the shoulders, and by the upper mandible of his bill being black and the lower one red.

In confinement this pretty bird is very active and lively, hopping about the cage, and frequently hanging from the bars with its back downwards. It is frequently taught to perform a number of tricks, and one was exhibited by a German master of legerdemain, who went through his part with great accuracy, feigning death at the proper moment, and lying motionless though a train of powder laid round it was fired. It has a fine merry song, which it commences in September and continues until May or the middle of June. When one is caught and caged it becomes tame and sings in about a fortnight afterwards. During that period it should be indulged with hempseed, of which it is very fond, and which makes it

* Field Naturalists' Magazine, vol. i. p. 313.

sing very boldly; but this kind of food being too hot, it is well to discontinue it by degrees, as when it is always fed on it, it rarely moults well or lives long. Hempseed, when given to it constantly and abundantly has been known to render the whole of its plumage black, excepting the yellow portion of the wings. Canary and linseed are the best food for them. Beside hempseed and canary it is fond of the seeds of dock, teasel and thistle. Give it now and then the head of a teasel, or of a thistle containing seeds, and it will amuse itself by picking them out and eating them.

It makes a very pretty nest of moss, roots, and dry grass, lining it with a few hairs or feathers, small tufts of fine wool, and the down of either the willow, the coltsfoot, or the broad-leaved cotton grass. Sometimes, however, the nest is lined only with cotton-wool. The eggs are five or six in number, of a blueish white, with a few bright spots dark in the centre, and shade off into a thinly spread purple.

There are two or three broods in the year, the first in May. Being very delicate while young they should not be removed from the nest until they are well feathered. They will readily learn to draw up their drink in an ivory bucket, or to open their seed-box when they want to eat. Young ones should be fed after this manner:—bread scalded, rape seed broken, and the yolk of an egg moistened with water until it becomes a thick paste; every two hours feed them with three or four bits of this paste and continue to do so until they begin to pick of themselves, then you may commence the canary and linseed, which, as before observed, is the best food they can have. When they seem sickly put a blade of saffron into their water, and give them a little groundsel every day while their illness lasts. If their sickness arises from looseness place a little bit of chalk between the wires, or crumble it on the floor of the cage. They should always have on the floor some bird sand or gravel for they will peck it and thus prevent the effects which otherwise arise from the oily nature of the seeds which they eat.

Before the young moult they are grey on the head, therefore bird-catchers and bird-fanciers call them *grey-pates*. The first brood of young ones acquire the black color on the head about the middle of September, and the red colour at the end of that month; but it is some time before it gets the perfect plumage on the head.

GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER.

THIS very elegant species arrives in England about the first or second week in April; the cocks coming about a week or ten days before the hens. They have been erroneously represented as rare birds; but they are to be seen almost every where that furze-bushes grow, as on the several heaths and commons round London. They breed on Penge Common, Streatham Common, Wimbledon Common, and in Combe Wood, which places during the summer evenings resound with their song, if it may be so called, consisting as it does, of "a singular, continuous, rattling, or rather thrilling sound, beginning generally very low, and becoming in about a minute loud enough to be heard at a considerable distance; this continues for several minutes, and is uttered with a kind of ventriloquism, the bird remaining in one place, though its voice meanwhile, would intimate that it was gadding from place to place. The note considerably resembles that of the mole-cricket; and Montagu suggests, that as it is chiefly uttered at the time these singular insects are about, it may possibly serve, also, as a decoy to inveigle them to their destruction; had this however, been intended, it is probable that both sexes would have been endowed with the same deceptive cry; whereas the hen is believed to be quite mute."* It sometimes utters its singular note while it flies.

It makes its nest of dry stalks and goose-grass, and lines it with fibrous roots. Its eggs are blueish white. In their wild state, they chiefly feed on insects. In confinement, the best food for them is eggs boiled hard and chopped fine, bread or stale bun crumbled, with a little chopped beef or sheep's heart. Give them three or four small meal worms or other insects during the day; not more, as they are apt to take them off their other food.

 GREEN-FINCH, GREEN-LINNET, OR GREEN-BIRD.

THE cock Greenfinch is easily distinguished from the hen by his colours being more vivid than her's. "It is so easily tamed," says Pennant, "that it frequently eats out of one's hand five minutes after it is taken, if you have an op-

* Field Naturalist's Magazine, vol. i, p. 439.

portunity of carrying it into the dark ; the bird should then be put upon your finger, which it does not attempt to move from (as being in darkness it does not know where to fly). You may then introduce the finger of your other hand under its breast, which making it inconvenient to stay upon the first finger, on which it was before placed, it climbs upon the second, where it likewise continues, and for the same reason. When this has been repeated nine or ten times, and the bird stroked and caressed, it finds that you intend it no harm ; and if the light is let in by degrees, it will very frequently eat any seed out of your hand, and afterwards continue tame." Its natural song is not very melodious, but when the bird is brought up from the nest it may be taught to whistle a tune, or to imitate the song of any other species.

Its nest is formed of roots, hay or stubble, and moss, and is lined with feathers, wool and plenty of hair. The eggs are five or six in number, of a clear white colour, spotted with red, precisely like those of the common wren and the willow-wren. They hatch in May. The young nestling may be taken at ten days old, and should be fed upon scalded bread and rape seed, with a little yolk of an egg, previously boiled hard, mixed well together into a stiff paste ; and then feed them once in two hours from six in the morning until ten at night. When they can feed themselves you may give them canary, rape and hemp seed. If it appears unwell give it a little lettuce seed, and put a bit of liquorice or saffron into its drink. Should its dirt bespeak a looseness, give it a little chalk and more hemp-seed.

LINNET.

THE breasts and crown of the head of almost all cock linnets, in their wild state, have during the pairing season a fine bright scarlet colour, which is only partly assumed by those cocks which have been caged during the winter. The breasts, however, of those caged birds which are often hung out in the open air will be of a brighter red than the breasts of those which are constantly kept within doors. The hens never have any scarlet on their crowns and breasts, nor so much white in their wings.

The linnet's song is much admired, and some very good

singers have been sold for as much as three or four guineas each. It will learn to whistle very well the song of the woodlark, canary, or any other bird; and it is said that it will learn even to speak.

The nest is made externally of moss and bents and is lined with wool and hair. The eggs are four or five in number and of a pale green colour with rusty spots. They have three or four broods in the year, the first being generally hatched in April. If you wish to bring them up from the nest let them be at least ten days old first. Cock nestlings may be easily told by their being the brightest brown on the back, and having the most white in the wings. You may feed your nestlings in the same manner as the greenfinch. Whenever they seem ailing give them a little lettuce seed, and now and then some chickweed, if you can obtain any in seed. If they have loose bowels give them some chalk, bruised hempseed and a stalk of plantain seed, and put some saffron or a bit of liquorice into their water.

SONG-THRUSH.

His song, which is heard during about nine months in the year, is much admired for the sweetness and variety of its notes. The nest is exteriorly formed of earth, moss and straw, the interior being plastered with a mixture of cow-dung or clay and chips of rotten wood. The hen lays five or six eggs, of a pale blueish-green colour with dusky black spots. Nestlings, as well as older birds, may be fed according to the plan recommended for feeding blackbirds. They must be kept clean, while young, or otherwise they will get the cramp, in the event of which, put some dry fern leaves or clean straw at the bottom of their cage and give them some bits of sheep's heart and finely chopped egg.

MISSEL THRUSH.

It has great resemblance to the song-thrush, but may be easily distinguished from it by being much larger, and having larger spots on the breast and white inner wing-coverts. When

angry or frightened it utters a very harsh note, like a chatter or shriek. It feeds on insects, the berries of the misseltoe, of the holly and of the mountain ash; and, in severe weather, even eats, according to Gilbert White, the pungent root of the wake-robin, *alias* cuckoo-pint, or lords-and-ladies. It is very pugnacious towards smaller species of birds. The nest is constructed of clay, coarse grass and linen, and is lined with wool. The eggs are four or five in number, of a flesh colour, spotted with blood red. If a cat, a raven, a crow, or a magpie comes near its nest, it instantly dashes at it until the intruder is repelled. He will even attack the sparrowhawk, the buzzard, and the kite, and make them fly from him with precipitation. The ringdove, stockdove, cuckoo, and butcher-birds are afraid of him. You may also feed both old birds and nestlings after the manner stated for the blackbird. Keep them clean, while young, for this bird like the Song-thrush is liable to get the cramp, in which case put some dry fern leaves or clean straw at the bottom of their cage.

NIGHTINGALE.

Most writers have written on the song of this night-warbling bird. Chaucer, in his poem of the Flower and Leaf, gives a most delightful description of the nightingale; he says its note is merry. Milton calls it the solemn nightingale:—

..... "nor then the *solemn nightingale*
Ceas'd warbling, but all night tun'd her soft lays."

Dryden, in describing the robbery of a nightingale's nest, thus concludes:

"But she supplies the night with mournful strains,
And *melancholy music* fills the plains."

Lee, in his "Theodosius," also says:

"Thus in some poplar shade, the nightingale
With piercing moans does her lost young bewail:
Which the rough hind observing as they lay
Warm in their downy nest, had stol'n away:
But she in mournful sound does still complain,
Sings all the night, tho' all her songs are vain,
And still renews her *miserable strain*."

'When every object around conveys the sensation of joy,' says Mr. Wilson, 'and heaven's abundance is, as it were, showering around us, the grateful heart beats in unison with

the varying elevated strains of the nightingale. We listen to its notes in a kind of extacy, as a hymn to the great and most adorable Creator of all. Abject must that heart be, and callous those feelings, and depraved that taste, which neither the charms of nature, nor the melody of innocence, nor the voice of gratitude or devotion can reach.'

There is a letter extant from the celebrated C. J. Fox, to the present Earl Grey, in which that pre-eminent statesman ejaculates his praises of the *cheerful* Nightingale; and Leigh Hunt, says, with great truth, "that the notes of the Night-gale, generally speaking, are not melancholy in themselves, but melancholy from an association with night-time, and the grave reflections which the hour naturally produces."

The Nightingale, or Night-singer, is a migratory bird, visiting us about the end of March, or beginning of April, the cock arriving nearly ten or twelve days before the hen. It has a very local distribution, hardly ever visiting Cornwall or any of the northern counties except Yorkshire. It is said also that it is never seen or heard in Scotland, North Wales, and Ireland. It sings usually from April until about the middle of June, and it is remarkable that caged Nightingales cease their song at exactly the same time when the wild ones do. His melody consisting of a great variety of shakes and quavers, uttered with admirable clearness and distinctness, is usually wild and unconnected; but when he unites his notes a little, which he seldom does, it is more beautiful than can be imagined. His song is remarkable for its surpassing strength and sweetness. When first taken they are very wild, and shy, but they soon become tame and fearless. As soon as they are caught, their wings should be tied, and then put into a cage with close sides and top, with a wire front, which should be covered with thin paper. Open their beaks with a quill and give them three or four little bits of moist sheep's heart or scraped beef, mixed with a little hard boiled egg and water, and let them have the same quantity every two hours. If it be too dry, it binds them, and if too coarse it interrupts digestion. Be very careful to remove from the sheeps heart or beef all the little strings, which if swallowed is apt to choke your birds. When you have kept them for about two days put a small bit of moist meat in their pan stuck full of ants, and throw them some earth containing ants upon the bottom of their cage. This will soon induce them to feed of their own accord. If you find that, in the course of half an hour, they have eaten up the

ants or their meat, give them some more of each, but no more mould lest it should mix with their victuals. The best way is to throw some of the mould upon the middle of a sheet of white paper and then to brush the ants off into the victuals, with a small brush. They will begin to sing at the end of the first week. These April-caught birds will only sing their natural song; whereas those which are brought up from the nest learn any notes they chance to hear.

Should you propose bringing up young nestlings, let them be tolerably well feathered before they be removed from the nest, as when taken too young they are liable to the cramp and looseness, the latter of which clogs and disfigures their feathers. Give them three or four bits of raw sheep's heart and hard-boiled egg every two hours, keeping them during each interval in a closed basket. After two or three days put them into a cage with a little bedding of straw or dry moss. As cleanliness is essential to their welfare, let them have, two or three days after their being caged, a little pan or saucer full of water, and then they will wash themselves as clean as any wild birds. When they have been two or three days in separate cages, you will hear the young cocks recording.

There is a variety of systems for dieting or feeding adult or full-grown nightingales. They may be fed on German-paste; but the best food for them is the food I have just mentioned. Let them have fresh victuals daily, and some fresh mould from an ant-hill about twice a week. Give them, occasionally, a fig or a bit of lump sugar. If they dirt too loosely, take as much of well-ground hemp seed as will lie on a sixpence and mix it thoroughly with the sheep's heart and hard-boiled egg. Give them two or three meal-worms a day, which may be procured at any bird fanciers. As nightingales in a wild state feed exclusively on live worms, spiders, beetles and the grubs of beetles, various species of large but low-flying moths, and on other insects. Indeed they never thrive well in a cage without live food, of which they require more than any other warbling birds.

The Nightingale shuns observation, abiding in the thickest coverts, and in these the nest is sometimes placed on a low fork, but generally on the ground. Withered leaves, particularly those of the oak, very loosely conjoined with dried bents and rushes, and lined internally with fine root fibres, form the structure. The eggs, of an olive-brown, are four

or five in number. The description of both sexes are alike. Rich brown above; rump and tail with a reddish tinge; throat and middle part of belly dirty or greyish white; lateral parts of the neck, breast and flanks grey; bill and legs light brown.

The nightingale leaves this country at the end of August; but, perhaps, some few remain with us much longer, for Mr. Newman says that he has frequently seen the bird "in the neighbourhood of Godalming, in Surrey, in October and once in November;" and that on the 12th of December, some years ago, he heard one singing there "clearly and distinctly though not very loudly." The poet Cowper heard one sing on the 1st of January 1792, and has written some stanzas upon the circumstance.

REDSTART.

THE cock Redstart is conspicuously distinguished from the hen, by his tail feathers being all of a flaming red colour, excepting the two middle ones which are brown. The hen, very much resembles the nightingale in colour, with the exception of the head and back which are of a grey-ash colour. The cock is a very handsome bird and sings a fine melodious song, being plaintive, broken, and interrupted. Some redstarts introduce into their song correct imitations of the notes of the whitethroat, blackcap, and bunting. He sings from morning until night, beginning in May and ceasing to be in full song about the middle of June. The redstart is very fond of flies, and very expert in catching them. One which was let out of its cage and allowed the whole range of a room, has been known to destroy every fly in a very short time, first catching those resting on the windows, the walls, and the ceiling, and then darting after those on the wing and catching them with a loud snap of the bill. The same food mentioned as being proper for the nightingale is the best for the redstart, whether young or old.

The nest is made of moss externally, and is lined with hair and feathers. The eggs are four or five in number somewhat like those of the Dunnock, but rather paler, longer

and more tapering at the pointed end. The nestlings when full grown fight each other.

Redstarts arrive in our island about the middle of April, and leave it towards the close of September or the beginning of October. They have, however, been seen in Surry even towards the close of November.

REED WARBLER.

THIS bird has been generally confounded with the sedge-warbler from which it is distinguished by its bill being broader at the base, all the upper part of its body being olive-brown, and its having no white stroke over the eye. "It is," says Sweet, "a very variable bird in its colours, some being very pale, and others altogether as dark; while those that are pale one season frequently becomes dark the next. It is a very lively and merry little bird, almost continually singing, and will chaunt by night as well as by day, sitting amongst the reeds or in some bush or tree near the water, where it feeds on gnats and such other insects as abound in moist situations. It is very fond of spiders, flies, grasshoppers, crickets, moths, small caterpillars, and other insects, and will swallow a larger one than would be imagined for so small a bird. In confinement it feeds readily on the usual food of its congeners, and is very fond of the yoke of a hard boiled egg, when grated or crumbled on the top of the other food, or put in that state into the cage in an empty egg shell. It should also be supplied with a few insects occasionally, such as spiders, flies, moths, caterpillars, meal worms, &c. Being an inhabitant of the sides of ditches, and rivers, it is very partial to washing, which it must not be allowed to do in winter, or it will wash itself until it is so weak that it can never recover; several of this species have been lost by allowing them to wash in winter: therefore it is better to give them their water in a very small cup, not much larger than a walnut, in which they can only dip their heads; but they even try to wash in this by throwing the water over themselves, which amuses without hurting them. A cock has been known to sing occasionally all the winter. The song is very loud and variable, consisting of a great number of notes, and sung with many changes of voice, so diversified as to resemble the song

of several different birds. These birds are very courageous and are sometimes apt to quarrel with each other; and if two are in one cage they are often obliged to be parted, or one will probably fall a victim to the other.

The nest is generally affixed to the side of a large tree such as a pollard, willow or poplar, and twisted round the young branches with the webs of caterpillars. It is a deep nest composed chiefly of dry blades of grass, intermitted with a few bits of moss, all closely and neatly bound tight together with strong webs of the gregarious caterpillars which infest the trees and hedges in summer. The eggs are four or five in number, of a greenish white color, with dusky blotches. It is rather a rare bird in this country, much more so than the sedge-bird, and only visits particular districts. It is not, however, uncommon in the neighbourhood of London, there being annually several in the Regent's Park, and, also, on the banks of the Thames, between Battersea Bridge and the Red House Tavern in Battersea Fields. It generally makes its appearance with us in the beginning of April and leaves us in September; its early or late departure seems to depend a good deal on the warmth or coldness of the season.

ROBIN REDBREAST.

THE Cock Robin cannot be told from the hen as the description of both sexes are so much alike. His fine song is well known, and some persons think it next in excellence to that of the nightingale. It is said that it may be taught to pipe and to speak. It is seldom caged, because it is so common and may be heard so constantly singing in its own native haunts, and the affection this bird has for mankind, having caused it to be a universal favorite, that most people are very reluctant to refuse it its liberty even for a moment. Those, however, who do cage it, either to study its habits more closely or to hear its beautiful song oftener, confine it, in a cage somewhat smaller than that commonly used for a woodlark or a nightingale.

The nest is formed of moss and is lined with hair and feathers. The hen lays from four to six eggs, of a dull white colour, sprinkled with rusty red spots which are so plentiful

at the blunt end that they seem to unite into one mass. They have generally two or three broods in the year, the first being hatched in April, the second in May, and the third in June. If intended to be brought up from the nest, they should be at least ten days old and then placed in a small box or basket. Keep them warm, particularly during the night time, and feed them at short intervals on finely chopped egg and sheep's heart, giving them only a little at a time. When they are getting strong and capable of feeding themselves, put them into a cage with some moss at the bottom of it, and place their food before them in a little pan. Give them now and then a few spiders and insects. It is said that they may be easily reared on white bread soaked in boiled milk. A little German paste mixed with some crumbs of a plain bun instead of bread, has been recommended, and they will thrive well upon this food alone. But as it is the nature of robins to feed upon insects, these ought not to be entirely denied them. Bechstein says that tame robins, when allowed the range of a room, destroy flies and insects. If two, equal in strength, are placed in the same room, he says, they will divide it, and each taking possession of his own half they remain in peace, unless one should pass his limits, in which case war begins and is maintained to the last extremity." If not kept warm and clean, or if allowed to have his feet clogged with his dirt, he will become attacked by giddiness and cramp, which will cause him to fall from his perch. For giddiness let him have an earwig every day for a week. If he appears to be otherwise ailing give him three or four spiders or meal worms. Should he manifest a loss of appetite give him occasionally half-a-dozen wood-lice. Let him have clean water two or three times a week, putting into it now and then a blade of saffron or a little bit of liquorice.

A writer in the "Magazine of Natural History," says—"Few observers of nature can have passed unheeded the sweetness and peculiarity of note of the Robin, and its various indications with regard to atmospheric changes. The mellow liquid notes of spring and summer, the melancholy sweet pipings of autumn, and the jerking chirps of winter. He may be considered as part of the naturalists' barometer. On a summer evening, though the weather be unsettled, he sometimes takes his stand on the topmost twig that looks up to the sky, or on the housetop, singing cheerfully and sweetly;

when this is observed, it is an unerring promise of succeeding fine weather."

SKYLARK.

THE cock is easily distinguished from the hen, and from all the other species of this genus, by having a crest of feathers on the head, and which it can elevate or depress at pleasure, and he is also browner and has a longer hind claw than the hen. His song, which is much admired for its harmony, commences in February, about the time of pairing, and continues until October.

They form their nest of hay and dried roots, and the hen lays four or five eggs of a dirty white colour, spotted with dark brown, and which are hatched in about a fortnight. They have generally two or three broods in the year; and sometimes four broods. The first brood are hatched about the middle, or towards the close of April, and a bird taken from the first brood when about ten or twelve days old is prepared for the purpose of rearing as a song-bird. But he must be allowed to hear only good songsters, as he will imitate the bad ones quite as readily if he chance to hear them.

To choose a cock, select the bird which is largest and longest in body, and has the longest hind claw. Put the young nestlings in a basket containing a little hay, and let the basket be covered or darkened, except when you are feeding them. While they are in the basket, feed them every two hours with beef chopped fine, egg and a little fig dust, moistened with water. Having kept them a week in the basket put them into a large cage about one foot square and containing a bedding of hay cut very short, or coarse bran, which should be changed every day. In about three weeks time they will be able to feed themselves, then give them German paste, bread or stale bun, and bruised hempeed sometimes, a little chopped egg; also, some sand and a turf at the bottom of their cage. When they are moulting give them a little saffron in their water. Having selected from the nest those birds which you believe to be cocks, put each in a separate cage, and you will hear them recording their song when about a month old, at which age they have been known to get into a corner and repeat every note like an

bird, but not so loud. If supplied, when full grown, with a good green turf once or twice a week, and a spider or mealworm now and then, and if properly attended to in other respects they are rarely sick; but if you observe their dirt is loose, grate a little cheese into their food, and give them a few woodlice three or four times a day, and put a little bit of liquorice into their water, which will also make them sing clearer. In a wild state they feed chiefly upon insects. When tamed they have been known to become so familiar as to alight on the hand and eat food therefrom.

STARLING.

WHEN full grown the cock is more beautiful in plumage than the hen, from which he may be distinguished by having a black stroke under his tongue, and by the feathers of his breast being variegated with showy colours. In spring he has a chattering song; but towards winter he utters a cheerless, monotonous, plaintive, long-drawn kind of whistle. He may be taught to whistle a tune or the notes of other birds, and even, to speak. Some persons imagine that the bird learns to talk more readily when his tongue has been slit; but this is a ridiculous notion. The truth is, that of those starlings, whose tongues have been slit, fewer learn to talk than of those which have not been subject to this barbarous operation. Starlings, well taught, have sold for five or six guineas. They need not be caged as their docility allows of their being easily domesticated.

They make their nest of dry grass, straw, and roots. They have five or six eggs of a pale greenish-ash color, and which are hatched in may. The nestlings have, at first, so much resemblance to young blackbirds that a common observer can rarely distinguish them, and in even a more advanced state they so little resemble their parents, that they were described by Montagu as a new species. If you wish to instruct one of them yourself, select a cock about ten days old and keep it clean and warm in some straw in a small basket and talk to it whatever you mean it to learn, and remember that you repeat to it the same lesson whenever you feed it. It should be fed every two hours on beef or sheep's heart chopped fine and mixed with fig-dust moistened with a little water.

five or six pieces, of about the size of a horse-bean. Full grown birds should be fed upon bits of raw meat, worms, and insects. They are in general very hardy birds, yet some of them are so subject to fits and so affected by them that they fall down and knock themselves about the cage, and, unless immediately taken out, will not desist until they have killed themselves. To cure these attacks give them occasionally a spider or the grub of a meal-beetle, and put a little saffron into their drink. They learn best in the dark or in a darkened cage, though they will also learn in the light.

STONECHAT.

THE cock Stonechat is distinguished from the hen by his colours being all more vivid and his head entirely black. His song is interrupted and broken, and he is remarkable clever in imitating other species.

Stonechats feed on berries, earthworms, snails, and insects, of which latter, they prefer beetles.

They make their nest of moss and dry stems of grass, and line it with fine grass, horse-hair and sometimes feathers. The hen lays five or six eggs, of a greenish colour, spotted with red, and they are hatched about the end of March. Cock nestlings may be readily told by the large white spot on the wing, which in the hens is of a light brown.

In confinement they are rather tender birds, and very seldom live long; they are remarkable for putting themselves into attitudes so curious that a person unacquainted with their habits, would pronounce them to be unnatural. Like the robin and the wheatear, they are constantly wagging their tails. A few Stonechats may generally be seen, on our commons, and other open places during the winter.

TITLARK.

THE cock Titlark differs from the hen by his being of a deeper yellow on the throat, neck, and breast, and by the white spot on his second tail-feather being larger. It is difficult to distinguish a cock nestling, otherwise than by his

recording, because in the course of the first year, the under part of his body is not of that deep yellow which distinguishes older cocks, but is lighter. They commence singing in April and continue until the middle of July. Some are excellent songsters, but many are very indifferent. Sometimes they will sing on the second or third day after they are first caged; but they usually take nine or ten days before they do so. In a wild state they feed on ants' egg, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, butterflies, and caterpillars. For two or three days after their being caged, strew the bottom of their cage with earth containing ants, and grate a little bread and mix it with twice its quantity of German paste very finely bruised hemp seed, and then sprinkle a little of this food on the earth. If they do not eat the bread and hemp seed, in the course of an hour throw a little more in along with some more ants. Should they still disregard their food, drop into their cage two or three meal worms, or small caterpillars, and suspend their cage in a light place, where they may be undisturbed, and then they will be sure to feed. After they have been caged four or five days you may begin to feed them according to the instructions here given for a woodlark or skylark. Nestlings may be fed after the plan of feeding the young of those birds.

The nest of the Titlark is formed externally of coarse hay, lined with hay of a finer sort, wool, and hair. The hen lays four or five eggs, of a grey colour, mottled with reddish brown. Titlarks may be bought so cheap, that it is hardly worth the trouble to bring them up from the nest.

TWIT OR MOUNTAIN LINNET.

This species differs in many respects from the common Linnet. In wild specimens the upper tail coverts are red; but this colour is rarely acquired after moulting in the cages. The cock is distinguished from the hen by his red rump. He has a strange chattering note, which can hardly be called a song, and which it almost continually utters, wherefore, a good bird must be kept along with linnets and goldfinches, as it induces them to sing likewise. You may give it the same food as a linnet. The eggs are blueish white, spotted with purple.

WHEATEAR.

WHEATEARS arrive in this country about the middle of March, and depart from it at about the close of September, or the commencement of October. Sweet mentions his having once seen a pair in Hyde Park, as late as the seventeenth of November, to which it may be added, that during some winters a few are seen on the commons and downs of Surry, and other counties. "This is a very interesting bird in confinement, and is almost continually singing; it will also sing by night as well as by day, if there is a light in the room where it is kept; it has a very pleasant, variable and agreeable song, different from all other birds which, (in confinement), it continues all the winter. When a pair of them are kept together in a large cage or aviary, it is very amusing to see them play with each other, flying up and down, and spreading open their long wings in a curious manner, dancing and singing at the same time. There is very little doubt, but that a young bird, brought up from the nest, might be taught to speak, as they are very imitative. When wild, the Wheatear feeds entirely on insects, such as small beetles, cock roaches, crickets, grasshoppers, butterflies, moths, earwigs, woodlice, most sorts of caterpillars, and maggots, and almost all other insects it is very fond of, when in confinement. Its common food is bruised hemp seed and bread intermixed with fresh, raw lean meat: also a little of the yolk of a hard boiled egg occasionally. It will thrive well, however, on a little German paste, mixed with the crumbs of a plain bun. You may also give two or three meal worms, or other insects, every day.

It forms its nest of dry grass, moss, and rabbit fur, and lines it with the latter material and feathers, and also with hair if it can procure any. The eggs are from five to six in number, of a light greenish blue colour. The young, if intended to be brought up from the nest, should be taken when half fledged, and fed on ants' eggs and white bread soaked in boiled milk.

 WINCHAT OR FURZE-CHAT.

THIS bird which is very often confounded with the Stonechat, arrives in this country in the beginning of April, and

departs about the close of September. During some winters however, a few Winchats continue to stay with us. The song is interrupted and broken, and its notes are very like those of the redstart. When brought up from the nest, or captured when very young, it may be taught any tune and will learn the songs of other species. Even wild ones have been heard imitating very correctly the songs of other species. For the cage it amuses, not only by its song, but by its remarkable and sometimes grotesque attitudes, and by the almost incessant wagging of its tail. The nest is chiefly composed of moss, and dry stalks of grass and is lined with finer grass, horse hair, and sometimes feathers. The hen lays five or six eggs, of a fine pale blue colour. "The young," says Sweet, "with care, are easily bred up from the nest, if kept warm dry, and clean, and fed with the same food as recommended for the old ones; they should not be taken till quite fledged and should at first be placed in a little basket with covers, as they will then readily open their mouths for food. This bird may be considered as one of the tenderest of the tribe, being very susceptible of cold. One that I bred from the nest by hand, learnt the song of the white-throat, red-start, willow-wren, nightingale, and also that of a missel-thrush, which it frequently heard singing in a garden near by; of the latter song it was so fond, that we were frequently obliged to put our favorite out of the room, not being able to bear its loud notes; it was certainly the best bird I ever kept of any kind, singing nearly the whole year through, and varying its song continually; the only fault was its strong voice. The food of this species is precisely the same as that of the wheatear."

WHITE-THROAT.

THE cock is distinguished from the hen by his being larger, by his fine white breast, and by the other parts of his body being of a darker colour than hers. In the summer time the breasts of the wild cocks assume a beautifully rosy tinge; which, however, is never acquired by those which have wintered in the cage. The White-throat is of a quiet and amiable disposition. In the cage or aviary he is very amusing, as he is almost constantly singing, and at such times, shows great determination not to allow any other bird's song to be heard

above his own. When he engages in a singing match against the nightingale, he will continue to sing for some hours, and raise his voice so unnaturally high, that his song loses that sweetness which at other times it possesses. Sweet had one which would run up to the nightingale, stretch out his neck, as if in defiance, and whistle as loud as it could, staring its adversary in the face; but if the nightingale attempted to peck him, he instantly flew away round the aviary, singing all the time. On ordinary occasions the white-throats' notes are lively, sweet, and musical; but they are not unfrequently alloyed with harsh sounding notes, and, indeed there are some birds of this species whose songs are always harsh and deficient of harmony. When he sings he erects the feathers of his head and throat, and throws himself into a variety of strange gesticulations.

The best food for them is scraped beef and egg, moistened with water, you may soon get them to feed on German paste, egg chopped fine and bread, add to which a little beef. This last food is not to be moistened.

WOODLARK.

This species is not so long as the skylark, though of a thicker form. Its hind claws not being so long as the skylark's, permit of its perching upon trees. The first feather of each of the wings is shorter than the second; while in the skylark both feathers are about equal in length. The cock differs from the hen in appearance by his being longer, wider from wing to wing, less spotted on the breast, and by his crest being larger.

The woodlark is a sweet songster, and nearly equal to the nightingale. He has a variety of delightful notes, all of which are less loud than those of the skylark. Like the nightingale, this bird sings also throughout the warm nights. Cocks caught in September, and encaged, will sing in a few days afterwards. "The hen, like other larks, sings also," says Bechstein, "but her strains are shorter and less sustained. These appear to be subject to whims. I have seen some which would never sing in a room, or in the presence of an auditor. These perverse birds must be placed in a long cage outside a

window. I have remarked that in general these obstinate birds are the best singers." Some will begin to sing in September, and will continue their song through Winter, Spring, and the best part of the Summer. Branchers or young birds caught in June or July, when they are two or three months old, soon become tame, but neither they nor those caught in January are so good as those which are caught and caged in September, because when you keep them during all their first winter they become tamer, and retain their song longer. When first caught, feed them on very finely bruised hempseed, well mixed with twice the quantity of bread and egg, having sprinkled the bottom of the cage with sand or red gravel, throw some of the food upon it, putting some, also, into the trough. When you observe that they have discovered and have become accustomed to the trough, you need not throw any more food on the floor of the cage. The best food is German paste, bread, or stale bun, hemp seed bruised, now and then egg boiled hard and chopped fine, two or three meal worms a day is good for them. Give them a fresh supply of food every two days, throwing away each time the victuals which may happen to be in the trough, as the stale food is likely to corrupt the fresh. The nest is formed of withered grass, fibrous roots, &c. The eggs which are four in number and of a pale brown, mottled, or clouded with red, yellow, &c., are hatched in April. If you desire to rear a nest of young ones, feed them on raw beef, chopped or scraped fine, mixed with egg and a little fig dust, moistened with water, giving them about four or five pieces of this mixture every two hours. When your full-grown birds are unwell, give them extra meal worms or woodlice a day, but no more, as too many of them not only injure them, but make them despise their usual food. The feet of woodlarks are often attacked by a disease which renders them so very brittle that the toes shrivel, ulcerate, and break very easily. When their dung is loose grate some chalk or cheese into their victuals, or on the floor of their cage, and, instead of gravel, strew it with earth containing ants. To assist, clear, or strengthen their song, put a little stick liquorice and a blade of saffron into their drink.

WILLOW-WREN.

THIS species, which arrives in England early in April, haunts woods, fields, gardens, and, indeed, nearly all situations. It is about five inches and a quarter in length. Its bill is brown edged with yellow; irides hazel; the upper parts of its body are yellow inclining to olive green, and the under parts are pale yellow; the quill-feathers are dusky brown edged with yellow; the under coverts of the tail are tinged with yellow; over the eye runs a faint dusky yellow streak, not so well defined as that over the eye of the wood-wren; and its legs and feet are of a light yellow brown. "Its charming and truly melodious song, consists generally of ten or twelve extremely sweet notes, delightfully modulated, each succeeding note being uttered a little deeper than the preceeding, like running down the notes of a gamut, but laying a greater stress on the concluding three or four. These notes are most pleasingly varied, being sometimes extremely loud, at other times uttered in a very soft and low tone; then, perhaps, they are delivered in a different key or with a few additional notes. In short this little bird is one of the most pleasing songsters we possess; and, in the spring it is one of the first of the migratory to greet us with melody."* In its wild state it feeds upon the plant-lice which infest cherry trees, and from its flitting about the trees to get them, gardeners have erroneously concluded that it eats the cherries; but if you present it with a cherry or some bits of one, it will refuse to eat it. It also eats flies. Sweet mentions that a wood-wren "caught in September was, in three days afterwards, let out of the aviary into the room to catch the flies that were numerous at that season. After amusing itself for sometime in catching flies, it began singing; and it did the same several other times when it was let out, and in a few days began to sing in the aviary. It soon became so familiar that it would take flies out of the hand; and when out in the room, if a fly was held towards it, would fly up and take it immediately." When first caught, it should be fed on scraped beef and egg moistened with water; by degrees you may get them to feed on dry food, such as, egg, bread, German paste and hemp seed bruised. Give it now and then a soft pear or a roasted apple, a treat of which it is very fond. The nest is composed of dried grass and moss, and is lined with

* Field Naturalist's Magazine. vol. i, p. 442.

feathers. The hen lays from six to seven eggs, of a white colour with rusty spots. The young ones are very gentle until they are perfectly able to feed themselves, and then they become very quarrelsome towards any other species of small birds which may happen to be confined with them. They seldom, however, quarrel among themselves, yet when they do it would seem that they are very pugnacious, for an instance is stated of a couple, not two months old, which fought most earnestly, pecking and pulling each other's skin. The hen if brought up from an early age, becomes very tame, and will fly upon one's finger to feed. The Rev. William Herbert, says, "he had some young willow-wrens in a cage containing some young wood-wrens, brown-wrens, and sedge-warblers. One of the willow-wrens, more than a week before it could feed itself, took to feeding two wood-wrens which were ten days older than it, and able to feed themselves, though still very willing to be fed by another. It showed exactly the same discrimination that an old bird does in leaning over the one it had last fed, notwithstanding its clamorous entreaties, in order to give the food to the other. No importunities of the brown-wrens could obtain a morsel from it. There was sagacity even in this, for the brown-wren is a much less nearly allied species, and is now referred to a separate genus. Its own fellow nestlings did not importune it for food. It was a cock, and three weeks after it beat the cock wood-wren so that it was necessary to separate them." "I had reared," says the same writer, "three cocks from the nest, and in July I wished to set one of them at liberty. Having let it out of its cage which stood near an open window, it continued for a long time hopping and flying about the top of the cage, and setting upon the pots, upon the ledge, and on a bar to which the roses were tied across the window. At last it began to travel up the creepers against the house, and getting upon the roof it flew over the buildings, and I did not expect to see it again; but, two hours after, it returned exceedingly hungry, and alighted upon the upper bar of the middle pane of the lower sash of the same window, and pecked hard for admittance. It was let in and fed heartily from my hand, after which it took its leave. I saw no more of it for two days, when it returned again for a short visit, in very good condition, and seemingly not at all pressed for food. About a week after it returned to the very same pane of glass, pecking as before; but I was occupied with a stranger on business, and could not

attend to it, so it departed for the season. On July the twenty-third, in the following summer, I was standing at the window, when a fine stout cock alighted upon the bar of the same pane close to my face, and began to peck as before for admission. Neither alarmed by my voice, nor by my little boy jumping up from his seat to look at it, it flew down upon some of the cage-pans which happened to be on the ledge of the window, and began pecking them as if to get food from them. It quickly departed again; but this is so contrary to the habits of the wild bird, that I considered it quite certain that the bird was my own nursling, which had returned after its trip to Africa to look at the window where it had been reared in its nest. The visit was a very pleasurable little incident. How many things which Europeans in vain desire to see, had my little wanderer witnessed since last he pecked at the window. Perhaps he had sung his plaintive notes near the grave of Clapperton, or peeped into the seraglio of the king of Timbuctoo." The majority of willow-wrens depart in autumn; but some of them remain all the year in Cornwall, and, perhaps, in some other counties.

WOOD-WREN.

THIS species arrives in England in April. It is readily distinguished by a broad yellow streak over the eye, by the brighter green of the upper parts, and by the pure silvery white of the belly and under tail-coverts. The gape of its mouth is wider and the *tibia* bone of the leg shorter than in the willow-wren; its attitudes are, generally, more crouching, and its wings longer, extending, when closed, more than half way down the tail. Its usual haunts are high trees in woods and plantations. Its song begins low, but gradually quickens to a certain pitch, when it subsides in a kind of thrill, and while uttering this its wings have a remarkable trembling. In a wild state it feeds upon insects, most of which it catches on the wing. When caged it may be fed upon a mixture of bruised hemp-seed, bread crumbs, and very finely chopped bits of fresh lean meat. It should also have now and then some very finely grated yolk of a hard-boiled egg. If, however, they neglect their own food for the sake of the

egg, give them a few flies, and it will change the course of their appetite, and they will take again to their former food.

WREN.

THOUGH so small a bird the wren has a loud yet soft song, which it continues nearly throughout the year. In a wild state it feeds on small insects and spiders, which during winter it searches for in barns, stables, and among piles of felled timber. It also eats elder-berries. When kept in confinement, it should have a large cage with close wires and lined at one end with wool, hare-skin, or some such article, to which it may resort for greater warmth. As soon as it is caged, give it plenty of flies, grubs of the meal-beetle, and, if obtainable, elder-berries, and then add by degrees some German paste, to which it will soon take, and you may continue to feed it principally upon it. The nest of the brown-wren is made, on the outside, of either moss or lichen, and is lined with feathers and hair. The eggs, which vary in number from ten to eighteen, are of a dirty white colour, spotted with red, and are hatched about the middle of May. The nestlings are of a rusty red colour, speckled with black and white. Let them be well fledged before you attempt to bring them up from the nest, and feed them according to the plan recommended for young nightingales, only in smaller pieces and in less quantity, and give them also some ants' eggs. When they become rather strong you may get them to feed upon the paste. If they become disordered, give them either a few flies, an earwig, or a small spider. Bechstein says, that he has never succeeded in preserving a wren more than a year, though others say that they may be kept two or three years in a cage. The cock has a larger head than the hen.

MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS.

A writer who has kept almost all the small British birds in confinement, says, "a cage containing twenty birds requires no more attention than a cage containing one; both should be daily cleaned and replenished with fresh food."

* * * * *

In the economy of most birds there are a number of little and curious peculiarities which often throw considerable light on their natural history; but which can only be learned by studying their habits in the cage. By keeping birds confined, a thorough acquaintance of their various notes is also obtained, which, of course, greatly facilitates all knowledge of their habits in the fields. But it is not from newly-caught birds, which are wild and timid, that such information and a knowledge of their free and unrestrained positions are to be derived. A wild bird, however, soon becomes familiar and fearless if placed with a number of tame companions; though it is advisable, when newly-caught, to keep it a few days by itself."

"It is remarkable," says the Rev. W. Herbert, "that many birds, which are quite kindly disposed to other birds, will not tolerate the presence of another of their own sex and species. The redstart fights with his brother nestling in the same cage, as soon as he is full grown; he will not tolerate the presence of a stonechat, or whinchat, whose habits are very similar to its own; but he does not attack a nightingale, and behaves decently in a cage full of seed-eating birds. A nightingale which had lived two years in a cage full of birds, in perfect amity with them, and which even suffered the brown-wrens to jump and rub themselves upon its back, instantly made a violent attack upon another nightingale which

was put into the cage. Two robins will never live peaceably together, but will fight till the weaker is killed or removed." *Herbert's edition of White's Nat. History of Selborne. p. 65.*

HEN birds when they become aged not only assume the cock's plumage but begin to sing. Sweet had kept a hen nightingale four years without its ever attempting to sing; but on the fifth year it frequently sang a pretty soft note. Some instances, however, have occurred of hen birds singing when quite young. The ornithologist just mentioned had a young hen willow-wren that sung. A hen blackcap was observed, in April 1833, perched near it, and singing with as much energy as a cock. A hen song-thrush, which was a very fine singer, had been always considered a cock, until it was two years old, when it began to lay. But both sexes of some species of birds, and probably, the redbreast, sing naturally.

THE mandibles of caged birds, especially of those which are over-fed, are apt to grow across each other, or to become unnaturally lengthened. In the redstart, redbreast, and some others, the *lower* mandible is more subject to grow than the upper one, and many instances of this fact have been observed in those birds. The lower mandible of a pied wag-tail grew so rapidly that it was necessary to cut off nearly a quarter of an inch of it every three or four weeks. The lower mandible of a twite continued growing even more rapidly for upwards of a year. In the bullfinch and ox-eye-tit, the *upper* mandible has been observed to grow in this way. Both mandibles, that is to say the whole of the beak, of the goldfinch and of the siskin are very apt to grow; but in one of the former, the *lower* mandible continued to protrude for eight months before the upper one began. As the bill of a full grown bird when once it begins to grow beyond its natural length is sure to continue growing, and will, if permitted, become so awkwardly long as to prevent the bird from feeding, it is absolutely necessary that the bill should be cut.

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